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PP RUEHROV
DE RUEHDS #1022/01 1051332
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
P 141332Z APR 08
FM AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 0284
INFO RUCNIAD/IGAD COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUEHAE/AMEMBASSY ASMARA PRIORITY 2502
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK PRIORITY 7341
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC PRIORITY
RHMFISS/CJTF HOA PRIORITY
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ADDIS ABABA 001022

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 04/14/2018

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SUBJECT: ETHIOPIA PRIME MINISTER TO CALL ON UN SECRETARY
GENERAL AND PERMREPS OVER ERITREA BORDER PROBLEM

Classified By: Ambassador Donald Yamamoto. Reasons: 1.4 (B) and (D).

11. (C) SUMMARY. Ethiopian State Minister of Foreign Affairs Dr. Tekeda Alemu on April 11 made it clear to Ambassadors representing PermReps to the UN Security Council that Ethiopia was frustrated and dismayed with the April 8 Secretary General's report on the Eritrea-Ethiopia border.

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The recommendations made on moving the demarcation process forward implied a departure from the 2000 Algiers Accord, the fundamental text guiding the resolution of the border problem. Further, Ethiopia was disturbed that the UN had not punished, or at least strongly condemned, Eritrea over its precedent in setting restrictions on UN operations. Prime Minister Meles plans to meet Secretary General Ban Ki-moon on April 16 in New York and is trying to arrange meetings with the PermReps as well. The Ambassador stressed to Tekeda and other Ethiopian officials that the Prime Minister's meeting in New York is high risk if he does not clearly state that Ethiopia accepts or intends to implement a final demarcation of the border. Mere criticism of Eritrea or questions about the Secretary General Report will fall on deaf ears and undercut Ethiopia's position. END SUMMARY.

PRESSING FOR COMMON GROUND

12. (C) State Minister Tekeda Alemu called in Ambassador on April 10 for a private meeting in advance of an April 11 meeting with Ambassadors from the UN PermRep countries. Tekeda was more blunt and pointed in his meeting with the Ambassador, calling the April 8 Secretary General report on the border as redefining or ignoring the precepts of the Algiers Accord and Cessation of Hostilities, the two fundamental texts negotiated by the international community which guide the parties towards peaceful resolution and demarcation of the border. The four recommendations laid out by the UN report implies that Eritrea's restrictions of UN operations will not be punished. Tekeda made it clear that Eritrea's actions now set the precedence for any country to restrict UN operations, putting at risk the safety and security of UN peacekeepers. Tekeda raised the issue of Ethiopian troops involved in peacekeeping operations in

Liberia and Cote d'Ivoire and 200 advance troops now in Darfur.

13. (C) Before the other Ambassadors on April 12, Tekeda called the Secretary General report an "approval" of Eritrea's actions which jeopardizes the safety and security of future UN operations. He added that Ethiopia's "confidence was shattered" by the report. The report conveys the wrong message to Eritrea and allows it to increase tensions along the border and continue the "crisis" over United Nations Mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea (UNMEE) operations. Further, Tekeda told the Ambassadors that UN member states must support the Algiers Accord as the only viable means to bring peace to both countries. He said the report gives Ethiopia pause on UN commitment to the Algiers Accord. This could force Ethiopia to drop out of the Algiers process if the UN seeks to redefine or change the precepts of the Algiers Accord. Tekeda said Ethiopia will maintain its defensive position along the border and while he did not see war as imminent, Eritrea is taking provocative actions which undercut the UN and makes the border situation tense.

14. (C) UNMEE Addis Ababa Head of Office Joseph Stephanides told Tekeda and the Ambassadors that South Africa has the chair of the Security Council for April and that the first chance for the border issue to be raised will be April 22. It was unclear whether the UN Security Council would issue a statement or resolution at that time. Tekeda replied that Prime Minister Meles will travel to New York and will meet with Secretary General Ban Ki-moon on April 16. He hopes to meet with the PermRep ambassadors to reaffirm Ethiopia's position on the border, and its commitment to the Algiers Accord and a peaceful demarcation of the border, and to stress that the parties themselves bear responsibility for demarcating the border.

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COMMENT

15. (C) Ambassador remarked to Tekeda in front of the other Ambassadors that the trip to New York is high risk because of the need of the Prime Minister to make it clear to the Secretary General and PermReps that Ethiopia is committed to

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peaceful demarcation. While Ethiopia has accepted the Eritrea Ethiopia Boundary Commission's (EEBC) delimitation decision, it has not accepted the demarcation decision because of its opposition to "virtual" or demarcation by geographic coordinates. Meles has indicated that "physical" demarcation, as originally called for by the EEBC, would be necessary in a final demarcation process. Mere criticism of Eritrean action and complaints about the Secretary General report will fall on deaf ears unless the Prime Minister stresses Ethiopia's commitment to a final demarcation. From this vantage point, the Prime Minister can then advocate his call, made from the beginning of the Algiers process, for direct dialogue with Eritrea to discuss the fundamental issues which divide both countries as well as the peaceful implementation of demarcation. The witnesses supporting the Algiers process have also backed direct dialogue to ease tensions and get the border demarcated. END COMMENT.
YAMAMOTO